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A
Consolatory Discourse

For the support of Distressed

WIDOWS

AND

ORPHANS.

Of General use to all Christians, who either
are, or may be, left in such Circumstances.

Psalms XL. 17.

*As for me, I am poor and needy; But the Lord thinketh upon [or
careth for] me.*

Psalms CXIX. 49. 50.

*Remember the Word unto thy Servant, upon which thou hast caused
me to hope.*

This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me.

Psalms XCV. 19.

In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my Soul.

Lament. III. 21.

*This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the Lords
mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.*

They are new every morning: Great is thy Faithfulness.

The Lord is my Portion, saith my Soul; Therefore will I hope in him.

Licensed and Entered according to Order.

L O N D O N,

Printed for John Newton, at the three Pigeons, over against the
Inner-Temple-Gate in Fleet-street. 1690.

Confession of Beliefs

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THE
P R E F A C E.

Christian Reader,

I Have only to pre-admonish, that this small Treatise is designed for the Consolation of the Religious and Vertuous; they are the persons who have the security of God Almighty's peculiar Providence over, and most Gracious promises to them. He is nigh unto the righteous, his eyes are upon them, and his ears are open unto their cry, to deliver them out of all their Troubles; and none of them shall be desolate: [Pl. 34. 15, &c.] All things shall work together for good to them that love God: [Rom. 8. 28.] To them he will be better than a Father, and Mother, and Husband, [2 Cor. 6. 18. Pl. 123. 13. Isa. 66. 13. Isa. 49. 15.-54. 4. &c.] They are the Poor and Broken-hearted, whom he sendeth good tidings to; They the mourners whom he will have comforted, [Isa. 61. 1, 2, 3.] Comfort ye, comfort ye my People, (saith your God,) speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, [Ch. 40. 1.]—As for others, though they partake of the scatterings of his Common Bounty, who maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust, (St. Mat. 5. 45.) and are accordingly, the Objects of our general charity also in their extreme necessities

The Preface.

'cessities, who, as we have opportunity, must follow that pattern of doing good to all ; yet they fall not under that more special regard, which God himself beareth, and hath commanded us in like manner to express, to the Household of Faith, [Gal. 6. 10.]--The truth is, as they are not capable of these divine Consolations, so they as little mind or relish them ; and the Apostle speaking of that sort of Widows, saith, they are dead while they live, 1 Tim. 5. 6.]

'And now there will not need an Apologic, I hope, for committing of these Papers to the Press, any more than for contributing towards a publick Benefit, and putting it into the hands of many to gratifie their afflicted Friends, at a very small expence, with what may prove a Cordial to their Spirits beyond any other ; at least will add considerably to those other supplies they are able to afford for their relief.--This I will say, for their greater encouragement, that nothing is here offer'd, which affects the Differences and Disputes among several societies of Christians, as now they stand unhappily divided ; but only what is agreeable to their common Sentiments, and that good Profession wherein they all agree together ; and I know not of any such entire Collection upon the Subject, as is to be found in the ensuing Pages.--Which that they may obtain the end, whereunto they are intended, is the earnest desire of the Compiler and Publisher, who is an hearty Lover of all sincere Christians, and zealously concern'd for the Widows and Fatherless among them ; from whose Prayers and Blessings he expects an abundant retribution.

B. Camfield.

Scripture Consolations

FOR DISTRESSED

WIDOWS

AND

ORPHANS.

HAVING had occasion lately, with a more than ordinary sense and compassion, to reflect upon the *disconsolate estate of poor distressed Widows, and their Fatherless Children,* (Three Families of my Relations, and those of the Clergy too, being fallen, in less than the space of a year, under that heavy affliction,) I have for *their sakes chiefly,* and those that *may be reduced to the like calamity,* on purpose collected *such Scripture comforts, as relate more especially to their sad and mournful condition;* and do now most heartily recommend the same unto their frequent perusal and serious meditations, That they may learn, *In Patience to possess their Souls, and through comfort of the Scriptures to have hope.* For which care also, I bow my knees to the Father of all Mercies and compassions, that his Grace and Blessing may accompany these well meant endeavours to their hearts, and “ That he “ would grant them, according to the riches of his Glory, to be “ strengthened with might, by his spirit in the inward man “ unto all long-suffering with joyfulness.

St. Luke.

21. 19.

Rom. 15. 4.

Ephes. 3.

16.

Colos. 1.

11.

B

Were

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Were not *Divine Providence* particularly concerned in taking care for *such Objects of Charity*, the World it self could hardly *subsist in any tolerable state*, abounding with so many instances of them in every Age and Place: But then the assurance of this good Providence is no where to be had with like advantage, both of certainty and fulness, as from that *Book of Books*, that inexhaustible Fountain and Treasure of choicest Consolations, the *Holy word of God*. From whence therefore,

First, I observe, That God is pleased to represent himself, as delighting in the Title of *their peculiar Friend and Patron*, and desirous to be known and glorified by it. He proclaimed this by Moses of old to the Israelites, *Deut. 10. 17, &c.* "The Lord
" your God is God of Gods, and Lord of Lords, a Great God,
" and a Mighty, and a Terrible, who regardeth not Persons,
" nor taketh reward: He doth execute the Judgment of the
" Fatherless and Widow, and loveth the Stranger, in giving him
" Food and Raiment; and the sense of this is often repeated
in the *Psalms*, and elsewhere.

Psal. 10. 14. "The Poor committeth himself unto thee;
" Thou art the helper of the Fatherless, [or Friendless,] And
" again, *ver. 17. 18.* Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the
" humble, [or Poor,] Thou wilt prepare [or establish] their
" heart, Thou wilt cause thine Ear to hear; To judge [or
" help] the Fatherless and oppressed to their right, that the
" Men of the Earth be no more exalted against them. *Psal. 68.*
[A Psalm in imitation of that of Moses at the setting forward of
the Ark, *Numb. 10. 35.* and formed by King David, probably on
like occasion, at the bringing up the same from the house of
Obed. *Idem.*] *ver. 4. and 5.* "Extoll him that rideth upon the
" Heavens, by his name *Jah*, and rejoyce before him. A
" Father of the Fatherless, and a Judge of the Widows, is God
" in his holy Habitation.—His name *Jah* (a contract of *Jehovah*) signifies his necessary Existence; and as certainly as he is,
he will shew himself also a Father of the Fatherless, and a Judge
of the Widows; to hear and defend their Cause; And, though he
inhabits

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inhabits the *highest Heaven*, yet he is pleased here *below* to exhibit himself in a peculiar manner the *Protector and Patron of such distressed ones*, Psalm 72. 12, 13, 14. "He shall deliver the needy when he cryeth, the Poor also, and him that hath *no helper*. He shall spare the Poor and Needy, and shall save the Souls of the needy. He shall redeem their Soul from deceit and violence, and precious shall their blood be in his sight. It is spoken of *God our Saviour, the Messias*, whose Kingdom is there resembled to the Government of a *just and mercifull Prince*, that is ready to relieve all that are oppressed and wronged; *A Prince of bowels and compassions*, to them that are in any kind of distress, to defend and deliver them out of it, to rescue them from the hands of the injurious and Oppressor, and preserve their lives from all that invade them, as persons that are *much valued and highly esteemed by him*.

See Dr.
Hammond
in Loc.

Psal. 146. Having represented the variety of depending upon the *best of mortal Men*, who at death must needs fail, and all their projects with them; He goes on to proclaim *their happiness, who have the Eternal God of Heaven and Earth for their Helper*; of whom he further adds for their encouragement, ver. 7, &c. "Who executeth Judgment for the oppressed, who giveth food to the hungry; The Lord looseth the Prisoners; The Lord openeth the Eyes of the blind; The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down; The Lord loveth the righteous, [*or careth for the righteous*;] The Lord preferreth the Strangers, he releiveth [*or defendeth*] the Fatherless and Widow; But the way of the wicked he turneth upside down. ——— The sense of all which is, that it is *God's peculiar property to interpose his Aid most seasonably, when our Distresses are the greatest*; To undertake the defence and patronage of those, who are most unjustly oppressed; To work even *Miracles of mercy for them that stand in most need of them*, signally to express his favour to *pious and charitable minded Men*, in all their necessities, and under all their restraints, and afflictions; and, if there be any *more destitute than other*, more shut out from all sorts of humane super-

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stitution, as those that have *neither House, nor Parent, nor Husband to relieve and comfort them, [the Stranger, the Fatherless, the Widow:]* These are the first Objects of his Grace and Compassion, of whom he will have a *peculiar care*, if in the absence of worldly aids they sincerely apply themselves, and constantly adhere to his Obedience; he will never leave, or forsake them.

"When my Father and Mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up, *saith the Psalmist in another place*, Psal. 27. 10. And again, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the Righteous forsaken, nor his Seed begging bread. Ps. 37. 25. I will close this with *that significant expression of the Prophet*, Hosea 14. 3. "In thee the Fatherless findeth mercy.

So then, by *this gracious Style and Title* which God assumes to himself, he *saith plainly* to his Servants, and Worshippers, what the Prophet *Jeremiah* relates as spoken of, or unto *Edom*, (it may be in some different sense,) Jer. 49. 11. "Leave thy Fatherless Children, I will preserve them alive; "and let thy Widows trust in me.

—— "He will establish the border of the Widow, *saith Solomon*, Prov. 15. 25. And again, "Enter not into the "Fields of the Fatherless, for their Redeemer is mighty; he "will plead their cause with thee. Chap. 23. 10, 11. to which effect also he had said before, "Rob not the poor because he "is poor, neither oppress the afflicted in the Gate; for the "Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the Soul of those that "spoiled them, Chap. 22. 22, 23.

And here I call to mind a *memorable passage* of Tertullian, *Ad uxorem*. in a Book written to his own Wife, where having quoted *that of the Prophet Isaiah, Ch. 1.* ["Judge the Fatherless, Plead for the Widow; come now and let us reason together,] as a sufficient instance of the *honour and esteem God hath for Widows*, 'He adds, that these two names, (*viz. the Fatherless, and Widows*), are no less open to the *Divine mercy*, than they are exposed to *humane contempt*; and that the *Father of all hath undertaken the Tuition of them*: See, *saith he*, how favourably he is look'd upon, who hath *done the Widows a good turn*. But then, how considera-

Ad uxorem.
L. 1. C. 8.

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‘considerable is the *Widow her self*, whose right the Lord will assert, and whose Cause he will plead and manage?’

Secondly, This now leads me to observe, how God hath displayed, and made good this most gracious Title of his, by those Special Commands which he hath given forth about them: — Such was that I just now quoted, wherein he calls upon the Rulers of Israel, as ever they look’d for mercy at his hand, to “*Relieve the oppressed, judge the Fatherless, and plead for the Widow*: And so the charge to all earthly Judges runs, *Pf. 82. 3.* “Defend the Poor and Fatherless, doe justice to the afflicted and needy.” *Isa. 1. 17.*

And the Transgression of this Law of Righteousness, whoever they be that are found guilty of it, is severely threatned, *Exod. 22. 22, &c.* “Ye shall not afflict any Widow, or Fatherless Child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the Sword; and your wives shall be Widows, and your children Fatherless, *i.e.* I will in the same kind meet with and requite you. And the words are all along Emphatical on the behalf of every Widow and Orphan; If thou afflict them in any wise, and if they cry at all unto me, I will hear, I will surely hear, and be Wrath upon it; yea, my Wrath shall wax hot, and I will retaliate it upon you; I will kill you with the sword, &c.

It was one of the solemn Curses denounced from mount Ebal, to the Equity of which all the people subscribed, *Deut. 27. 9.* “Curst be he that perverteth the judgment of the Stranger, the Fatherless, and the Widow: And all the people shall say, Amen.

And accordingly it is taken notice of in the Prophets; as matter of the highest Provocation, and the ominous fore-runner of God’s heaviest Judgments. So *Isa. 1. 23.* “They judge not the Fatherless, neither doth the Cause of the Widow come unto them; upon which therefore it follows immediately, “Therefore saith the Lord of Hosts, the mighty are of Israel, Ah! “I will

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" I will ease me of mine Adversaries, and avenge me of mine
 " Enemies : — So also, *Jerem. 5. 28.* " They overpass the
 " Deeds of the wicked ; they judge not the Cause, the Cause
 " of the Fatherless, yet they prosper, and the Right of the
 " needy do they not judge ; — upon which therefore it
 " immediately follows : " Shall not I visit for these things ?
 " Shall not my Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this ? —
 And *Chap. 21. 12.* " O house of *David* ! thus saith the Lord,
 " Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is
 " spoiled out of the hand of the Oppressour, lest my Fury
 " break out like fire, and burn that none can quench it, be-
 " cause of the evil of your doings ; *which again he repeats, Chap.*
22. 3, &c. " Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and
 " deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the Oppressour, and
 " doe no wrong, doe no violence to the Stranger, the Father-
 " less, and the Widow ; neither shed innocent blood in this
 " place : — But if you will not hear these words, I swear by
 " my self, saith the Lord, that this house shall become a deso-
 " lation : — And thus in the Prophet *Ezekiel* we find it
 reckon'd up *by name among those Abominations for which Jerusalem*
was judged, and burnt as dross in the furnace, Chap. 22. 7. ' In
 ' the midst of thee have they dealt by Oppression with the
 ' Stranger ; in thee have they vexed the Fatherless, and the
 ' Widow : — See it again once more in the Prophet *Ze-*
chary, Chap. 7. 9, 10, &c. ' Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts,
 ' saying, Execute true judgment, and show mercy and com-
 ' passions every man to his Brother : And oppress not the
 ' Widow, nor the Fatherless, the Stranger, nor the Poor,
 ' and let none of you imagine evil against his Brother in his
 ' heart : — ' But (*alas ! saith the Prophet*) they refused to
 ' hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their
 ' ears that they should not hear, &c. — ' Therefore (*saith*
 ' *he*) came a great Wrath from the Lord of Hosts. Therefore
 ' it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear,
 ' so they cried and I would not hear, saith the Lord of Hosts :
 — Yea, and our *blessed Lord and Saviour having said,* ' Wo
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‘unto you *Scribes, Pharisees, and Hypocrites*, for you devour
 ‘Widows houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: Saint
Mat. 23. 14. adds forthwith upon it, ‘Therefore you shall
 ‘receive the greater Damnation, *viz. upon both these accounts*;
 first for *devouring Widows houses*, and then doing of it under a
devout pretence, or colour.

The Psalmist represents it as the utmost *Impiety and Atheism*
 together, to commit such an horrid wickedness, and yet to think
 that God will connive at it, *Psalm 44. 6, &c.* ‘They slay the
 ‘Widow, and the Stranger, and murder the Fatherless: Yet
 say they, the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of *Ja-*
 ‘*cob* regard it: Understand, O ye *Brutish* among the People,
 ‘and ye Fools, when will you be wise? —

And it is a *peculiar Curse* which he leaves upon some heinous
 sinners, (such especially as had been unmercifull themselves,
 and delighted in cursing others,) that they shall ‘leave their
 ‘*Children Fatherless*, and their *Wives Widows*, and that in so
 destitute and forlorn a condition, they shall ‘find none to pity
 ‘or relieve them; *Psalm 109. 9, 12.* — And so likewise in
 ‘the Prophet *Isaiah*, we read, *Chap. 9. 17.* ‘Therefore the Lord
 ‘shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have
 ‘mercy on their Fatherless, and Widows; for every one is an
 ‘Hypocrite, and an Evil doer. — And this is the *Retaliati-*
 ‘on particularly threatned unto those who afflict the Fatherless, and
 Widows; as I noted before from *Exod. 22.*

But then, *Thirdly*, Let it be farther observed, what singular
 care it pleased God to take among his People, the Jews, in the
 stated Provisions which he appointed to be made for them; of
 which there are sundry instances.

(1.) For these, by name, it was as well as for the *Levites*,
 that he allotted the *third year's Tith* of their increase to be brought
 in and laid up, *Deut. 14. 29.* ‘And the Levite, because he
 ‘hath no part, nor inheritance with thee, (as the other Tribes
 ‘had,) and the Fatherless, and the Widow within thy Gates,
 ‘shall

See Mr.
Ainsworth
on Exod.
14. 22.

'shall come and eat, and be satisfied, that the Lord thy God
'may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.
— For the right understanding of which you must know,
that there was a *first Tith* given to the *Levites*, out of which
they also paid a tenth part again to the *Priests*; (*Num.* 18. 24,
—28. *Neh.* 10. 37, 38.) And then, of that which remained,
the owners separated a *second Tith*, which themselves did eat
before the Lord the *first and second year*; and this was that
which on the *third year* (and so on the *sixth year*) was to be
given unto the *Levites*, and the *Poor* here specified: — Now
this third years Tithing had a *solemn Confession and Prayer an-
nexed to it*, *Deut.* 26. 12; &c. 'When thou hast made an end
'of Tithing all the Tiths of thy increase the third year,
'which is the year of Tithing, and hast given it to the Levite,
'the Stranger, the Fatherless, and the Widow, that they
'may eat within thy Gates, and be filled; then thou
'shalt say before the Lord thy God, (*viz. by way of appeal unto
him, as Witness and Compurgator of thy integrity in the Case, and
Judge and Avenger, if it be otherwise*;) 'I have brought away
'the hallowed things out of my house, and also have given
'them unto the Levite, and unto the Stranger, to the Fa-
'therless, and to the Widow, according to all the Command-
'ments which thou hast commanded me; I have not trans-
'gressed thy Commandments, neither have I forgotten them:
'Look down from thy Holy habitation from Heaven, and
'bless thy People *Israel*, and the Land which thou hast given
'us, as thou swarest unto our Fathers, a Land that floweth
'with Milk and Honey: [thus regularly claiming the *promised
Blessing* upon their conscientious performing the condition of
it.]

And the violation of this Commandment God sometimes punished
them for, with a great Dearth and Famine, *Neh.* 5. 3. — 13.
10. And unto this that notable expouflation in the Prophet Ma-
lachi seems to referr, *Mal.* 3. 8, &c. 'Will a man rob God?
'yet ye have robbed me: But ye say, wherein have we robbed
thee? In Tiths and Offerings; ye are cursed with a curse, e-
ven

See Dr.
Peacock
on the
place.

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‘ven this whole Nation. [In this they were generally guilty, that they detain’d part of these Tiths, which they ought according to God’s Law to have paid, and thereby did abridge God of his due.] ‘Bring ye all the Tiths [*therefore, saith he*] ‘into the Store-house, that there may be meat in my house, [not only provision for the *daily and annual Sacrifices*, and for the *Priests, and Levites waiting on the Altar*; but for the *Residue also of the Poor of God’s Family, the Fatherless, and the Widow*; who are mentioned particularly among those, in whose behalf he threatens to appear as a swift witness in judgment against them, verse 5.] ‘And prove me now herewith, saith the Lord, if ‘I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out ‘a Blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it : ‘And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall ‘not destroy the fruits of your Ground, neither shall your ‘Vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the ‘Lord of Hosts; and all Nations shall call you Blessed, for ye ‘shall be a delightful Land, saith the Lord of Hosts.

But then again, (2.) Besides this, God strictly required a peculiar regard to be had unto the Fatherless, and Widows, in their *solemn feasts every year*, Deut. 16. — So it is expressed in the sacred Text, for the *Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost*, verse 10. ‘Thou shalt keep the Feast of Weeks unto the Lord ‘thy God with a Tribute [*or sufficiency, as the margin reads* ‘it] of a free-will offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give ‘unto the Lord thy God, according as the Lord thy God hath ‘blessed thee; and thou shalt rejoyce before the Lord thy ‘God, thou, and thy Son, and thy Daughter, and thy Man- ‘Servant, and thy Maid-Servant; and (*then immediately next to these Domesticks it follows*) the *Levite* that is within thy ‘Gates, and the Stranger, and the Fatherless, and the Wi- ‘dow, that are among you. — So likewise for the *feast of Tabernacles*, verse 14. ‘And thou shalt rejoyce in thy Feast, ‘thou, and thy Son, and thy Daughter, and thy Man-Servant, ‘and thy Maid-Servant, and the Levite, and the Stranger, and

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‘and the Fatherless, and the Widow, that are within thy Gates. And it is *plainly signified*, that they were to *rejoyce in so doing*, and not to part with their contributions hereunto *grudgingly*, as well knowing, that it was the way of God’s own appointment in order to the securing unto themselves a greater blessing, ver. 15. ‘Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn Feast unto the Lord thy God, in the place which the Lord thy God shall chuse, because the Lord thy God shall bleis thee in all thy increase, and in all the works of thine hands; *Therefore shalt thou rejoyce.*——And though it is not *so distinctly* mention’d in what is said of the *Pass-over*, or *Feast of unleavened Bread*, yet that also is not only to be *inferred* by way of *just consequence*, (it being the *Principal and leading Feast*,) but *manifestly included in the generall clause which follows*, and names them all together, ver. 16, 17. ‘Three times a year shall all thy Males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall chuse, in the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and in the Feast of Weeks, and in the Feast of Tabernacles, and they shall not appear before the Lord empty; Every man shall give as he is able, according to the Blessing of the Lord thy God, which he hath given thee.

And, according to this Law of theirs *three solemn anniversaries*, the days of *Purim* also were afterwards ordained to be kept yearly, ‘As days of Feasting and Joy, sending portions “to one another, and gifts to the Poor [among whom, we may be sure, the *Fatherless and Widow* were not forgotten;] *Esther* 9. 22. And indeed, such are the most proper Guests for true and religious Feasting, whose entertainment God himself stands engaged to see abundantly paid for and recompenced, *St. Luk.* 14. 13, 14. These least deserve the name of *Feasts of Charity*, *St. Jud.* 12.

But then, (1.) Over and above this two, there were three or four things in their yearly Harvest allotted to the Poor, and among them chiefly to the *Fatherless and Widow*; viz. A nook or corner of the Field, the forgotten sheaf, the Gleanings, and single or fallen Grapes, and ungathered Olives, *Levit.* 19. 9, 10. ‘When
‘ye

ye reap the Harvest of your Land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy Field, neither shall thou gather the Gleanings of thy Harvest; And thou shalt not glean thy Vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every Grape of thy Vineyard, thou shalt leave them for the Poor, and Stranger, I am the Lord your God. *Which place we may compare with Deut. 24. 17, &c.* Thou shalt not pervert the Judgment of the Stranger, nor of the Fatherless, nor take a Widows Garment to pledge, but thou shalt remember that thou wast a Bondman in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee thence; therefore I command thee to doe this thing. When thou cuttest down thine Harvest in the Field, and hast forgotten a sheaf in the Field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it, it shall be for the Stranger, and for the Fatherless, and for the Widow, that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands. When thou beatest thine Olive Tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again; It shall be for the Stranger, for the Fatherless, and for the Widow. When thou gatherest the Grapes of thy Vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterwards; It shall be for the Stranger, for the Fatherless, and for the Widow. And thou shalt remember, that thou wast a Bondman in the Land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to doe this thing. — We cannot but note here, *what a stress God Almighty lays upon it, and how all along he disciplin'd the Jews, as in a School of continual Charity, especially towards the Stranger, the Fatherless, and the Widow.*

Fourthly, Let us next observe, how he hath thought good sometimes to go out of the common road of his Providence, and work sundry Miracles, on purpose to testifie and confirm the mercifull respects he bears to such.

(1.) I know not well, whether I should place the instances of Naomi and Ruth under this Head of Discourse, or rather have allotted them one by themselves. Sure I am, they were vertuous and religious Widows, and left in a desolate, distressed, and poor condition,

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condition, and yet by a wonderful conduct of Divine Providence most seasonably relieved, provided for, and advanced, as may be read at large in the Book of Ruth, made up wholly of this argument, and which, next to the clearing of our blessed Saviour's Genealogie, may seem to have been written and preserved among the sacred Records, chiefly for the encouragement of others in all succeeding Ages, to become followers of their Piety, Faith, and Patience; and as a Book, I may say, of Peculiar comfort unto Widows in their Afflictions; The abstract of it is this:

Eliamelech, a Man of some note in *Bethlehem-Judah*, with his Wife *Naomi*, and their two Sons, *Mahlon* and *Chilon*, is forced at first by a sore Famine, in the time of the Judges, to quit his Habitation, and with what moneys he could gather up, to travel and provide sustenance for himself and Family in the Country of *Moab*, a strange and heathenish Country. And there now, not long after, he dies, and leaves *Naomi* a sorrowfull Widow among strangers: And there also, after this, to the increase of her sorrows, she Buried her two Sons the only remaining supports of her Widowhood; who, during there abode there, had married two *Moabitish Women*, now also made desolate Widows, *Orpah* and *Ruth*. — *Orpah* upon a little entreaty, betakes her self to her own Friends for maintenance; and we hear no more of her. But *Ruth* resolves to abide by her Mother-in-Law, whatever became of it, out of love to her and her Religion.

These two Widows therefore having spent all they had, return together unto *Bethlehem*, entertaining each other with doleful complaints of their mutual losses as they go; and God's good Providence was all the way over them in that hazardous journey of theirs, till they came safe to the desired place. — But upon their coming thither, all the City, saith the Text, was moved about them, and they said, Is this *Naomi*? That is, so soon as they had heard the mournfull story, and seen her great Affliction, and what necessities she was reduced unto; How that going out from them in a wealthy estate, accompanied with her Husband, and two Sons, grown up to manhood, she was now

return'd

return'd in so calamitous and destitute a condition, without Husband or Children, or Goods, and only a young distressed Widow hanging on her; They were all astonished, the Women especially, who had formerly known her in her latter days of Prosperity; and they could scarce believe their senses, that this miserable object, they now behold, was the same Matron. Is this Naomi, say they? And she, hereupon takes the occasion offer'd her, (as passion is often quick and witty in venting of it self,) to shew the sense she lay under of her own sad condition. Well may you ask, "Is this Naomi? Call me not Naomi, (saith she, ver. 20, 21. reflecting upon the signification of that name, that is pleasant, or delectable) "but call me Marah, (that is, Bitter,) For the "Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, "and the Lord hath brought me home empty. [That is, depriv'd of all those comforts and means to subsist on, which I formerly had, and expos'd as you see, to want and penury.] "Why "then call you me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified "against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me.—But, all this while she thought not of God's more gracious design in thus humbling of her, that in due time he might raise and exalt her.—Hither his good Providence brought them at the beginning of Barly Harvest. And so the young Widow bestirs her self immediately to glean for the present relief both of her self and Mother, in this pinch of their necessity. ver. 22. And the hand of Heaven directs her (a perfect stranger in the Country) unto a wealthy Kinsman's Field, whose name was Boaz, and inclin'd his heart also to be very kind and compassionate towards her; not only to permit her quietly to gather after his Reapers, but to speak friendly to her, and give special charge to all his Servants about her, that none should doe her wrong or Reproach; Nay, that they should let some handfulls fall on purpose for her, and call her to eat and drink with them.—And to make short, at last, upon farther knowledge and consideration had of his Relation to her, and her own Vertues, according to the Jewish Chap. 4. Law and Custome he charitably fulfills the right of a nearest Kinsman, and redeems the Land which was left, and takes her for

for his Wife before the Elders in the Gate, where all the people accompanied their Marriage with joyful acclamations, and pious good wishes; ver. 11, 12. And God himself blessed it, by giving him soon after by her a Son, named Obed, the Father of Jesse, and Grand-Father of King David, of whose Seed the Messias was to come, and to be born too in that City of Bethlehem, (Saint Matth. 2. 5, 6.) — So that by this means, the Pilgrim Moabitish Widow became, not only a Proselite to the true Religion, but a Glorious Mother in Israel; And Aged Naomi also is both comforted and exalted with and by her; made a joyful Nurse to dandle that on her knees, which she was past bearing in her Womb; sees her Name and Family revived, after the loss of her Husband and Children, and her poor Daughter in Law, who loved her entirely, better unto her in the Issue, than seven Sons. And so the Women, who at her first arrival lamented and wondered at her fall and unhappiness, did now earnestly congratulate the Blessed change and alteration of her Fortune, as we call it, but (if we speak religiously) of God's providence towards her. Saying, Upon the birth of the Child; "Blessed be the Lord, which hath not left thee this day without a Kinsman, (or, Redeemer) that his name may be famous in Israel!" And he "shall be unto thee a Restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age, For thy Daughter-in-Law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven Sons, hath born him. —"

You perceive by this time, how deservedly I call'd this History of Naomi and Ruth, the Widows Book of Consolation. I will now pass on to some more miraculous instances of God's especial favour and goodness towards them.

(2.) Upon this errand principally it was, that he sent Elijah the Prophet unto Zarephath, or Sarrepta, Luke 4. 26. to seek relief of the indigent Widow there, because he purposed to requite her kindness with a marvellous blessing upon her own head, 1 Kings 17. 9, &c. 'Arise, saith God unto him, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: Behold, I have

‘ I have commanded a Widow Woman there to sustain thee. [And here indeed was the Fountain head of all her sufficiency.] So he arose, and went to Zarephath, and when he was come to the gate of the City, behold, the Widow Woman was there gathering of Sticks: And he called to her, and said, fetch me, I pray thee, a little Water in a Vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. — *Whereunto when she had mournfully replied,* “As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a Cake, but an handfull of Meal in a Barrel, and a little Oil in a Cruse, and behold I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my Son, that we may eat it and die. *He presently answered her,* Fear not, go, and doe as thou hast said: But make me a little Cake thereof first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy Son. [Doe me this office of Charity, and trust in God that thou shalt be no looser by it.] ‘For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, the Barrel of Meal shall not waste, neither shall the Cruse of Oil fail, untill the day, that the Lord sendeth rain upon the Earth,] viz, to make it bring forth Corn and Oil in abundance. — Now observe the event: She went, and did according to the saying of Elijah: And She and He, and her House,] which seems so intimate, that She had more in Family than her Son only, though Nature put her upon providing for him before them,] did eat it many days, the Margin reads it a full year: and others conjecture, three years at least, from what is mention’d Ch. 18. 1. of the third year of the Prophet’s being there.

* And the Barrel of Meal, saith the Text, wasted not, neither did the Cruse of Oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spoke by Elijah. Such was the reward of this poor Widows Faith and Charity. And here we have an example, how God can lengthen out a little, and that our life is supported by his word of Blessing only. * After this the Widow’s Son sickens, and dies, ver. 7. and she passionately resents it as a stroke of God’s anger, saying to Elijah, Oh thou Man of God, art thou come unto me, to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my Son?

* The Famine is said to continue three years and six months. Luk. 4. 25. Jam. 5. 17. * Deut. 8. 3. Mar. 4. 4.

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'Son? He therefore, *in pity to her case*, (upon a *Divine instinct*.) undertakes the *restoring of him again*. How his *affections* were moved, you may perceive by *his Prayer*, ver. 20. He cried 'unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, hast thou brought 'evil upon the Widow, with whom I sojourn, by slaying her 'Son?—And *then it follows*. 'He stretched himself upon the 'Child three times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord 'my God, I pray thee let this Child's Soul come into him 'again. And the Lord heard the voice of *Elijah*, and the 'Soul of the Child came into him again, and he revived. And 'Elijah took the Child, and brought him down out of the 'chamber into the house, and deliver'd him to his Mother, and 'Elijah said, See, thy Son liveth.—And this is the *first we read of in Holy Scripture, that was raised up from the dead*. The first instance is, the *Son of a poor Widow*.

(3.) This Prophet afterwards was taken up into Heaven, and *Elisha succeeded him in a participation of the same Spirit*, and he also was a *comforter of the Widows*. To this purpose we read, *How strangely he multiplyed the distressed Widows oil for the discharge of her Husbands Debts, and the Ransome of her Sons, and her and their future maintenance*, 2 Kings 4. 1. 'There 'cried a certain Woman of the Wives of the Sons of the Pro- 'phets, [that is, *who had been Wife to one of the Sons of the Pro- 'phets*] unto Elisha, (*who was now Head of their College*.) Saying, 'Thy Servant my Husband is dead, and thou knowest that 'thy Servant did fear the Lord: (He was, it seems, a *very good and Religious man, and known to the Prophet for such, the greater was her loss of him*: But this was not all, he *left her in debt*.) 'And the creditor is come, *saieth she*, to take unto him 'my two Sons to be Bondmen.—*This deplorable case now moves the Prophet to say unto her*. 'What shall I doe for thee? 'Tell me, what hast thou in the house. And she said, thine 'Handmaid hath not any thing in the house, (*viz. of that na- 'ture, as to raise money from,*) I have a pot of Oil. (*A poor stock! but enough for that power to work upon, which can create out of nothing.*)

nothing.] ' Then he said, go, borrow thee Vessels of all thy neighbours, even empty Vessels; borrow not a few; (or *scant not*.) And, when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and thy Sons, and thou shalt pour out into all these Vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full. — And now, let us note the success: ' So she went from him, and shut the door upon her, and upon her Sons, who brought the Vessels to her, and she poured out; and it came to pass when the Vessels were full, that she said unto her Son, (*one of her Sons then next her*,) bring me yet a Vessel; and he said unto her, there is not a Vessel more. And the oil stayed, viz. *That there might be no waste, having run freely as long as there was any thing to receive it in.* ' Then she came and told the man of God. Gratefully acknowledging the miracle wrought for her. — ' And he said, go, sell the Oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy Children on the rest. — Such was the bounty of God by Elisha, to this Prophet's Widow, exceeding her first request. She was solicitous only for the redemption of her Children from the creditors Arrest: But she receives, wherewithall both to discharge the debt her Husband left her in, and provide a competency for her self and her children to subsist a while upon.

(4.) Unto these instances now, I will annex that Miracle of our Blessed Lord and Saviour, the great Prophet whom *Elisha* and *Elisha* were but Types of, recorded in the New Testament, St. Luk. 7. 11, 12, &c. ' It came to pass, that he went into a City called Naim, and many of his Disciples went with him and much People. Now when he came nigh to the gates of the City, behold there was a dead man carried out, the onely Son of his Mother, and she was a Widow: This was the compassionableness of the case. A desolate Widow, following the Corpse of her Son, her onely Son, the stay of her Age, the comfort of her Widow-hood, to the grave: And it was matter of general Lamentation among her neighbours also, for much People of the City was with her. — ' And when the Lord saw her, (*said the Evangelist, his Bowels too were moved,*) he had

had Compassion on her; and said unto her, weep not: — But alas! *Good words alone were not able to cheer up one in her condition*; and therefore unto those he forthwith adds a miracle of *Beneficence*; and indeed most of his miraculous Works were of *this nature, so many Evidences of his divine Power in shewing mercy, and doing good*: And he came and touched the bier, (or *Coffin*), and they that bare him stood still; and he said, *young man, I say unto thee arise*; [*thus he commanded his Soul into his Body again*]; and he that was dead sat up, and he began to speak, and he deliver'd him to his Mother: — Whereby he did not only *stay her Tears*, but *turn'd her mourning into Joy and Gladness*.

And now this instance prompts me to observe, in the *fifth* place, That God hath planted soft and tender Hearts, or natural Bowels in the generality of men (who have not out-sin'd their Humanity) to resent the sad Circumstances of the Widows and Fatherless; but *these in good men are in a more eminent manner renew'd and improv'd*, who are required to put on as the *Elect of God, Bowels of Mercy and Kindness*, Colos. 3. 12.

What Rhetorick there is in the naked Representation of so destitute an estate, is visible in that parable, which the wise Woman of Tekoah artificially used to move King David to recall Absolom, 2 Sam. 14. 4. &c. *She fell on her face to the ground, and did obeisance, and said, Help, O King! And the King said unto her, what aileth thee? And she answered and said, I am indeed a Widow woman, and mine Husband is dead, and thine Handmaid had two Sons, and they two strove together in the field, and there was none to part them; but the one smote the other, and slew him: And behold, the whole Family is risen against thine Handmaid, and they said, deliver him that smote his Brother, that we may kill him for the Life of his Brother, whom he slew; and we will destroy the Heir also; and so they shall quench my Coal which is left, and shall not leave to my Husband, neither name nor remainder upon the Earth: — And the King said* to

‘to the Woman, go to thine house, and I will give charge concerning thee: — There needed not any farther request, than what the case it self made for her.

But then, a *Widow's Importunity* is capable of adding much hereunto: To which purpose we are instructed from our Saviour's Parable of the Importunate Widow, who wearied out a careless and unjust judge, (who neither feared God, nor regarded man,) by her continual solicitations, to take pity on her, St. Luke 18. Upon which the Evangelist gives us also our Blessed Saviour's Remark: ‘And the Lord said, hear what the unjust judge saith: And shall not God avenge his own Elect, which cry day and night to him, though he bear long with them? ‘I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. —

But we will turn from him to a much better man; a man that hath the Testimony from God himself, of being perfect and upright, fearing God, and eschewing Evil, Job 1. 1. 'Tis the expression he describes the utmost stretch of wickedness, and oppression by, Job 24. 3, 4. ‘They drive away the Ass of the Fatherless, they take the Widow's Ox for a Pledge, they turn the Needy out of the way; the Poor of the Earth hide themselves together. And again, verse 21, ‘He doth not good to the Widow: — And Eliphaz indeed had charged him with this horrid guilt, as the cause of his present Calamities, Chap. 22. 9, 10. ‘Thou hast sent Widows away empty, saith he, and the Arms of the Fatherless have been broken: ‘Therefore snares are round about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee: — But the good man was of quite another Character and Practice; and therefore had just occasion upon this injurious Charge to make mention of it for his own Apology, Chap. 29. 12, &c. ‘I deliver'd the Poor that cried, (saith he,) the Fatherless, and him that had none to help him; the Blessing of him which was ready to perish came upon me; and I caus'd the Widow's Heart to sing for joy: — *Tea*, and he appeals to God for his witness in this matter, and denounceth a most heavy Imprecation against himself, should he have been found to have done otherwise, Chap. 31. 16, &c. ‘If I have withheld the Poor

Chap. 22. 9.

' from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the Widow to
 ' fail, or have eaten my morsel my self alone, and the Father-
 ' less have not eaten thereof; (for from my Youth he was
 ' brought up with me, and I have guided her) *that is, the Wi-*
 ' *dow,* (from my Mother's Womb;) if I have seen any perish for
 ' want of Clothing; or any Poor without Covering; if his
 ' Loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with
 ' the Fleece of my Sheep; if I have lift up my hands against
 ' the Fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate; then let
 ' mine Arm fall from my Shoulder-blade, and mine Arm be
 ' broken from the Bone: [*i. e. as I am falsely traduced to have*
served the Fatherless:] No, I had a greater dread upon me of
 the Divine Vengeance, than to dare to venture on such a piece of
 insolence: ' For destruction from God was a Terror to me, and
 ' by reason of his Highness I could not endure: — This alone
 would have restrain'd him, had nothing else; but it was more-
 over clean contrary to the bias of his Temper and Inclination, who
 looked upon the meanest of his Servants as his Fellow-Brethren
 and Sisters; and therefore reckon'd with himself that he could
 never answer it to their common Father, should he wrong or abuse
 any one of them, as he had said just before, *verse 13, &c.* ' If I
 ' did despise the Cause of my Man-Servant, or of my Maid-
 ' Servant, when they contended with me; what then shall I
 ' doe when God riseth up; and when he visiteth what shall I an-
 ' swer him? Did not he that made me in the womb, make
 ' him? And did not one fashion us in the Womb?) that is,
 plainly, have we not all one Father? Are we not all the same
 Flesh and Bloud? But now, if there be found so much goodness and
 compassion in Men; who at best have their Defects and Imper-
 fections; how much more is there in God? 'Tis the way of argu-
 ing which our Blessed Saviour hath taught us for our great encour-
 agement, St. Matth. 7. 11. ' If ye then being evil, know
 ' how to give good gifts unto your Children; how much more
 ' shall your Father which is in Heaven, give good things to
 ' them that ask him?

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This goodness of Nature is but a Beam from his Sun, or a drop from his Fountain: — And this is yet farther advanced in the World by the Principles of Christianity; which urge us to the perfection of Charity; and there cannot certainly be a fitter Object of it, than the distressed Widow and Fatherless: Such a charity was *Tabitha*, or *Dorcas*; a Disciple of our Saviour's at *Joppa*, famous for *Acts* 9. 36. 'This woman was full of good Works, and Alms-deeds which she did; who therefore sickening and dying, the Disciples there, upon so great a loss, sent presently for *St. Peter* to come to them; and when he was come he found all the Widows standing by weeping, and shewing the Coats and Garments which *Dorcas* made while she was with them: — And this proved an effectual motive to the miracle of her Resuscitation; the restoring of so serviceable a Member to the Church: — And this now is made by *St. James*, the Proof and Tryal of the Purity of our Religion, Chap. 1. 27. 'Pure Religion and undefiled before God, even the Father, is this (*said he*) to visit the Fatherless and Widows in their affliction;] — that, as we have experienced, the goodness, and great Mercy, and Beneficence of God towards our selves; so we also shew the same in all the instances we can towards those who are most necessitous, and from whom we can expect the least requital.

Eras. Par.

Lastly, I will close these Scripture Observations with a brief reflexion upon the special regard both of Christ and his Apostles unto these.

As to our Blessed Saviour, I have already instanced in his Compassion to the Widow of *Naim*, in raising up her onely Son: But you may note farther with me, (1.) That he honoured a Widow with the manifestation of himself in the Temple; when, according to the prediction of the Prophets, he made his first appearance there, *St. Luke* 2. 36, &c. (2.) That he admired, and commended the poor Widow's mites of Charity, above all the richer one's Oblations, *St. Mark* 12. 41, &c. And Jesus sat over against the Treasury, and beheld how the People cast money

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' money into the Treasury : And there came a certain poor
 ' Widow, and she threw in two Mites, which make a Farthing :
 ' And he called unto him his Disciples, and saith unto them ;
 ' Verily I say unto you, that this poor Widow hath cast more in
 ' than all they which have cast into the Treasury ; for all they
 ' did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want did cast
 ' in all that she had, even all her Living : — And this I the
rather note, because a principal grievance of good and religi-
ous Persons, when reduced to a low Estate, is usually this ; that
they have not wherewith to doe the works of Charity, which for-
merly they did, or others doe : Whereas from hence they may
gather, how graciously God will accept and reward the meanest of
their offerings, and take the Will for the Deed from them : Ac-
ording to the condition and circumstances he hath brought
them to. — (3.) That he recommended such Guests especially
to the Feasts of Charity : I touched on this occasionally before ;
but here I will transcribe the Text for it, St. Luke 14. 12, 13, 14.
 ' When thou makest a Dinner, or Supper, (*saith he,*) call not
 ' thy Friends, nor thy Brethren, neither thy Kinsmen, nor thy
 ' rich Nighbours ; lest they also bid thee again, and a recom-
 ' pense be made thee :] *This is only a Traffick, or Merchandise,*
and Exchange of Courtesies and Civilities,] ' But when thou ma-
 ' kest a Feast call the Poor, the Maimed, the Lame, and the
 ' Blind, and thou shalt be Blessed, for they cannot recom-
 ' pense thee ; for thou shalt be recompensed at the Resur-
 ' rection of the Just.] *This is the genuine Hospitality which*
makes God himself a Debtor to his Creatures ; and for which he
undertakes that it shall not lose it's reward. — (4.) That he took
all opportunities to inculcate, and enlarge upon the precepts of Cha-
rity : — (1.) When some had Indignation at the good Woman's
cost who annointed him, upon a pretence that the ointment might
have been sold for much, and given to the poor ; he so vindicates
her kindness, as to allow also of that Charity which they preten-
ded to : ' Jesus said, why trouble you the Woman ; she hath
 ' wrought a good work on me : For you have the Poor with you
 ' always, and whensoever ye will ye may doe them good ; but
 ' me

me ye have not always, &c. compare St. Matth. 26. 10, 11. with St. Mark 14. 6, 7. Where he seems to refer to what was said in the Law, Deut. 15. 11. 'The Poor shall never cease out of the Land; therefore I command thee, saying, *thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy Brother, to thy Poor, and to thy needy in the Land.* And in another place; Give to him that asketh, saith he, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn thou not away, St. Matth. 5. 42. Which was also the prescription of the Law, Deut. 15. 8. — (2.) He often cites and approves of the great Commandment; 'Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self; and he tells a particular story, or parable, to shew them, that every one in necessity, and not a few only, was to be looked upon as our Neighbour; and having therein mention'd a compassionate and merciful Samaritan, bids all to imitate him: 'Go, saith he, and doe thou likewise, Saint Luke 10. 30. &c. — (3.) He gives an admirable Paraphrase upon this Command, and such as would be a perpetual relief to the Widow, and Fatherless, particularly in that golden Rule of his, St. Matth. 7. 12. 'All things whatsoever ye would that men should doe unto you, doe you even so to them; for this, saith he, is the Law; and the Prophets. — (4.) He commends secret Alms, with the assurance, that our Father who sees in secret shall reward them openly, St. Matth. 6. 4. And elsewhere he asserts, that whosoever giveth to any one of his Disciples a Cup of cold water only, in the name of a Disciple, shall in no wise lose his Reward, St. Matth. 10. 42. That is, he that doth the least kindness on that score to them, shall be sure of a Retribution for it. — (5.) In other places he calls upon them that are rich and able, to lay up their Treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, nor Thieves break through and steal, St. Matth. 6. 20, &c. as St. Luke hath it; 'To provide themselves bags which wax not old, a Treasure in the Heavens that faileth not, St. Luke 12. 33. And, as prudent Stewards of their abundance, to make themselves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness, [which is truly so, when withheld from Charitable uses,] that when they fail they may receive them into

'into everlasting habitations, St. Luke 16. 9. — (6.) And which is *most of all considerable*; he acquaints us, that in the last day, when he shall come to judge the World, and doom all men to their eternal, and unalterable estate of Happiness, or Misery, he will proceed especially by their omission, or practice of the Laws of Charity, and interpret the doing, or not doing of it to the least and most despised Christian, as done or not done to himself, St. Matth. 25. — (7.) Once more yet, observe, that while he was hanging upon the Cross, and amidst his Torments there, he was nevertheless mindfull of a comfortable Provision for his desolate Mother after his departure, St. John 19. 26, 27. When Jesus saw his Mother, and the Disciple whom he loved, standing by; he said unto his Mother, Woman, behold thy Son: And to that Disciple, behold thy Mother. And from that hour, saith the Evangelist, that Disciple took her to his own Home.

And now, in the next place, for the Apostles of our Blessed Saviour, it shall suffice to note, that they appointed a daily Ministration for poor Widows; and when the number of them increased, ordained an order of men, by the name of Deacons, particularly to attend on that work, Acts 6. And St. Paul hath left especial Rules concerning them, 1 Tim. 5. As for them who had Children, or Nephews, able to doe for them: He requires
 verse 4. 'that they learn first to shew Piety or Kindness at home, and
 'requite their Parents; for that saith he, is good and accep-
 verse 3. 'table before God: But as for them who were Widows indeed, That they should have an Honourable maintainance out of the publick stock.

After which I shall not mention those many Hospitals, and Alms-houses, and Funds of Charity, which God hath excited several worthy Benefactors to erect, and contribute to, upon this account, throughout the Christian World: And will only add, that the Liturgy of the Church hath in all ages been mindfull of them, and recommended them by name unto God Almighty; as we still retain it in our excellent Litany: 'That it
 'may

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' may please thee to defend and provide for the Fatherless Children and Widows, and all that are desolate and oppressed.
' We beseech thee to hear us, Good Lord!

Now therefore, so long as there is a God, who with a *Paternal Providence* presides over and governs the World, who is a *very present help in Trouble*, and (as the Prophet *Isaiah* speaks) a *Strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, and a shadow from the heat, a Father to the Fatherless*, (as hath been shewed,) and an *Husband to the Widow*: And so long as there are men of *compassions, or men truly and sincerely religious left; a Church of God, and genuine Christian upon Earth*, the Widows and Fatherless may rest secure of it; that they shall not be *utterly forsaken, or destitute*: They have an *Heavenly Father and Friend*, who is *All-sufficient, evermore with them*; who knows what is really *best and most profitable for them*, and wanteth not for *Wisdom, or Power, or Goodness*, to relieve them; an *ever-* Ila. 25. 4.
Ila. 9. 6.
63. 16.
lasting Father and Husband, infinitely beyond all others. And they have as many *Brethren and Sisters* to sympathize with them, as there are *Good men and Christians*, to whom their Case is made known.

Let them take notice of that *eminent Title of Grace*, whereby God is peculiarly acknowledged and address'd unto, *under the New Testament*: 'The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named, *Eph. 3. 14, 15*. That is, in short, the *Father of Christ, and all Christians*, as he said before his *Ascension*, 'Go to my Brethren, and say unto them; I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God, *St. John 20. 17*.

The *Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* by a *natural and inef-
fable generation*, who is therefore call'd his *own, his Only-begot-
ten, his Dearly-beloved Son, born before all the Creation*: And 'he that spar'd not his own Son, but deliver'd him up for us
'all; how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? *Rom. 8. 32*. Or what *good thing* will he now deny us, which we ask in the *prevailing name, and for the sake and merits of*

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this

this Son of his Love, who died for us, and ever lives to make intercession on our behalf?

See Dr.
Hammond
on Ephes.
3. 15.

And then through him our Father also,] of whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named,] that is, the whole World, Gentiles as well as Jews, are now acknowledged for his Children by special Adoption and Grace, his select and peculiar Household; who are never from under his Eye and Care; whom as he hath commanded others, Galat. 16. 10. so he will much more himself, especially upon all opportunities, doe good unto the Household of Faith.

I will conclude with the good and seasonable Advice, First of our Blessed Lord and Saviour, and then of his Apostles. The Lesson from our Blessed Saviour, is that of his Sermon on the Mount, as it is called, St. Matth. 6. 25, &c. 'Take no thought for your Life, [that is, no unbelieving, anxious, corroding, disquieting, or disturbing Thought,] 'what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your Body, what ye shall put on. (1.) 'Is not the Life more than Meat, and the Body than Raiment? [that is, Have you not in hand a pledge of what is greater than that you are apt to be solicitous for? He that gave and continues your Life, cannot he as easily give you Meat? And he that made and maintains your Body, cannot he also as easily cloath it? (2.) Touching Food,] 'Behold the Fowls of the Air, for 'they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into Barns; 'yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them; Are ye not much better than they? [may you not therefore much rather rest secure of his Blessing upon your ordinary prudence, and industry? (3.) 'Which of you by taking thought can add one Cubite to 'his Stature? [And is it not then a manifest point of Folly, to trouble and molest your selves with that, which is no ways beneficial, and advantageous; but many ways are hurtfull to you? (4.) 'And why take ye thought for Raiment? Consider the 'Lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say to you, that even Solomon in 'all his Glory was not array'd like one of these: [The greatest Art falls

falls short of Nature's work, and the best of humane skill and cunning is infinitely below the meanest instances of Divine Power and Wisdom;] 'Wherefore if God so cloath the Grass of the Field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the Oven, [and there is an end of it] shall he not much more cloath you, [being of an Higher form, a far more considerable rank, and made for immortality,] O ye of little Faith? — Therefore take no thought, saying what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithall shall we be cloathed: For (5.) after all these things do the Gentiles seek. [The Heathens, who want your Light of Knowledge, whose Portion and Hopes are confined to this life only, and who live without a Sense of God and his Providence in the World; make these the Object of their continual Sollicitude:] 'For (6.) your Heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things; [you have a Father, and so of goodness, an Heavenly Father, and so of Power sufficient to relieve you; and none of your wants or necessities are hid from him. He knows what you stand most in need of, and what supply is most fitting for you, and when is the most seasonable time for it: Nay, and you have his promise, if you be not wanting to that great and principal business, he hath given you in charge to mind.] (7.) But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you: [Take but care of your Christian Duty, and God will provide for the Rest. Faithfull is he that hath promised, and you may rely upon him for it.] Thus you are not to disquiet and trouble your selves for your present provision, much less to enlarge your cares and concerns for a long while to come: — So he proceeds; 'Take no thought therefore for the morrow; for (1) the morrow shall take thought for the things of it self. [You are not sure of the morrow, or what shall befall you on it; you know not, what a day may bring forth: 'Tis time enough to look after that, when it comes.] (2) Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. [You need not anticipate Labour and Affliction, every day brings enough with it to Exercise both your Patience and Diligence; to watch against the Evils of Temptation that assault you; and to

bear the evils of calamity and affliction, that may light upon you. This you see is an incomparable discourse, and full of most powerfull Arguments and Considerations to ease and quiet our Minds, if we attend as we ought unto them. — And hereunto I would have you add his Farewell Sermon, as it may be styled to his drooping Disciples, when he was about to take his leave of them, in the 14. 15 and 16 Chapt. of St. John too long for me in this place to write over, or gloss upon. — I will but touch here and there:

Ch. 14. 1.

Verse 2. 3.

Verse 13.

Verse 15.

Verse 16.

Verse 18.

Verse 23.

'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. I go to prepare a place for you: And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto my self, that where I am, ye may be also. Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I doe, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. — If ye love me, keep my Commandments; And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. — I will not leave you comfortless, (or Orphans as the margin reads it,) I will come to you. — If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. — How can they be solitary, whom each of the three Persons engage thus graciously to visit and dwell with? 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you: Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be affraid. — These things have I spoken to you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. — If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. — Remember the word that I said unto you, The Servant is not greater than the Lord. — Ye shall be sorrowfull, but your sorrow shall be turned into Joy: — And your joy no man taketh away from you. — These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace, in the World ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the World.

After all which, he betakes himself to Prayer, Chap. 17. To teach us, what we should doe also.

And

Distressed Widows and Orphans.

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And unto *this* now Saint Paul directs us, as the most effectually cure of all our griefs and troubles, Philip. 4, 6, 7. 'Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication let your requests be made known to God; And the Peace of God, which passeth all our understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. To which I will only subjoyn St. Peter's Counsel, 1 Eph. 5, 6, 7. 'Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that may exalt you in due time; casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.

To whom now be Glory, and Dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

The Distressed Widows Prayer.

MOST Gracious God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named; who knowest what things we stand in need of before we ask; and art able to doe exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think; and hast promised to hear the Prayers of thy Children and Servants in their distresses: Upon this encouragement I do now prostrate myself before the Throne of thy Grace, that I may obtain Mercy, and find Grace for my seasonable help in this time of need. I humble my Soul, with all the submission I can, under the sense of thy mighty Hand, which hath reduced me to this afflicted condition. Thou Lord hast given, and thou hast taken away; for ever Blessed be thy Name! Good and Righteous art thou in all thy disposals, and hast a Sovereign unquestionable Power to doe with thine own Creatures as it pleaseth thee. Not *what I would*, but what thou wilt; not as *I would*, but as thou wilt: Not my sinfull and foolish Will, but thy All-wise and Holy Will be done. Yea, I will bear thy

Scripture Consolations for

thy indignation, O Lord, because I have sinned against thee. It is of thy Mercies, that I am not consumed: Wherefore should the living complain, and that for the punishment of their Sins, who are always punished less than their iniquities deserve? Sanctifie, I beseech thee, all the dealings of thy Providence towards me, that it may be good for me in the Issue to have been afflicted; and however grievous my loss and sufferings are unto me for the present, they may bring forth the peaceable fruits of Righteousness, when I shall have, during thy pleasure, been exercised with them: In the mean while, I pray thee, support and strengthen me by thy Holy Spirit with all might in the inward man, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; Raise me up a supply of Friends to pity and compassionate my forlorn and destitute estate, and do thou reward all their kindnesses. Provide for me and mine, as it shall seem best unto thee, the Food which is convenient for us, our daily Bread; and give us Contentment with, and Thankfulness for thy Allowances, whatsoever they are. Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief, and increase my Faith in thy All-sufficiency, who art every where with me; a Refuge unto which I may always resort, a strong Tower, into which I may run to be safe. Protect and defend me from all evil Temptations, and grant that I may do nothing at any time to offend or displease Thee, or forfeit that Blessed Privilege which thou givest me in thy Holy Word, of applying to, and resting on thee in my present circumstances, under that most comfortable Title of the Patron of Widows, and Father of the Fatherless. Make me a follower of Holy and Godly Matrons, and those Widows indeed whom thou puttest Honour upon, who trust in thee, and serve thee, continuing in Prayers and Supplications night and day.

Hear the voice of my Sighs and Tears; Let my cry come unto thee, O Thou that hearest Prayer, and art a present help in the day of trouble, and deal with thine Handmaid according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, for the merit

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'merit sake of thy dearly Beloved Son, Jesus Christ the Righteous, the Propitiation for our Sins, and our Advocate at thy right Hand; To whom with thee, O Blessed Father, and thy Holy Spirit of Grace and Comfort, be all Honour and Glory World without end. *Amen.*

Why art thou cast down, O my Soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: For I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.

O God, my Soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee.— I will say unto God, my Rock, why hast thou forgotten me? &c.

Why art thou cast down, O my Soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? &c. Psal 42. 5, 6, 9, 11. — 43. 5.

FINIS.
